Running in Circles

This was not what Bob envisioned for his family. He had tried to distance himself and family from his parents. Once he was back, his father tried to get him to sign on with the City of Trinidad. It would be steady work with sure pay. However, Bob refused to work Sanitation like his dad; he had enough of that. He was smarter than that. The job Bob did take briefly was that of dog catcher. But the city refused to issue him a side arm against rabid or dangerous animals, like the rest of the city humane department workers were authorized. No one wanted to trust the crazy kid that came back from the war.

Still, Bob was always working at something. He worked with Gene's Coal Co., Corley Radio, Trinidad Community TV, Garcia construction and even sold insurance for Old National. He and his growing family also worked on Aunt Reyes's farm, pulling onions in Lahana, CO.

From Bob's earliest upbringing, he understood the woman of the house handled the money. Paychecks earned by Robert were cashed and he gave the lions share to Nellie to pay rent, utilities, groceries, etc. Until…

"I went to work for Valley Supply in Rocky Ford in 1958. That was a horrible experience. I was making $75 a week as bench foreman. (Nellie) had apparently talked to the (owner) by phone and told him to not give me the check, but to give it to her. Well (I signed my check) but (the owner) wouldn't give it to me. He took it personally to the house and gave it to Nellie. Well, this went on for some time, until one day…the landlord came over and says, 'You owe me 3 months' rent…you got 20 minutes to pay me 3 months' rent or get the hell out of the house now!' Well, (we) had to get outta the house. Nellie hadn't paid the utility bill (the rent), hadn't paid anything. Where the money went, I later found out, was all going to her parents in Sacramento, CA. In fact, she did that (every chance she had) …until I took control of the money so bills would get paid."

When his family was evicted from their Rocky Ford home, Robert couldn't keep leaving his jobs to run home and deal with the latest crisis. He wanted to open his own business; regardless of his parents' opinion; involving rocks. Lapidary arts were becoming very popular. Robert knew enough to become a supplier of raw material, to several shops in the tri-state area of Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona.

Bob took what money he had left and rented a downtown storefront for his 'Lost Indian Rock Shop'. It would be one of several shops Bob would establish throughout his life.

Bob was trying to keep his young family as far away from his folks as possible. His father berated his idea of how to make a living. He made fun of him every chance he had. As the shop grew and started to attract customers, Bob began to hear rumors some folks didn't want him there. Still working part time with Valley Supply, Bob put every spare moment into that shop.

Then something exploded. Blew a hole in the brick side of the building and in Bob's fragile resolve. Furious at his limited options, Bob bundled his family back to Trinidad. He located a rental house on Nickerson, at the edge of Trinidad in the neighboring town of Jansen.

Those years were hazy in the memories of Bob and his oldest daughter. Sometimes he was home in Trinidad, most times not. One obvious element of the early 1960's was Bob's need to be in control…no matter how dangerous or reckless.

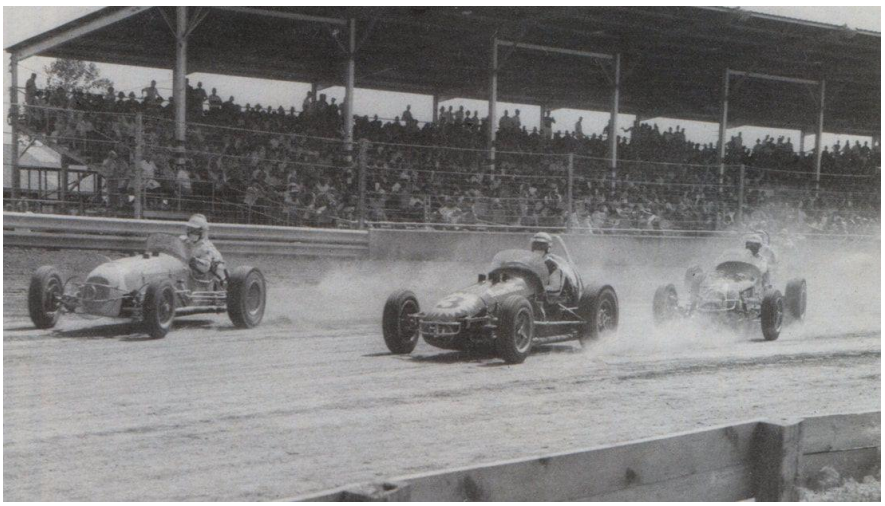
The 'daredevil' component of Bob's personality needed an outlet, even during the years stateside in the military. The Army sponsored football teams, boxing and even racecar venues for their soldiers to let off steam. Before Korea started, Bob was a stockcar driver. As rocks grounded him, he relished the chance to fly like the wind.

"I met Dr. (Louis) Stanley when I opened up the rock shop in (Rocky Ford); he was a rockhound also. We were out walkin and he gave me one of his big, humongous cigars. He was talkin about his Formula One car. 'How'd you like to race? You talk like you've done some racing.' I says, yes. 'You afraid?' He asked. 'Hell no! Why should I.' I told him, 'I survived Korea…it couldn't be any worse than that!' He said, 'Well, I've got a Formula One, how'd you like to drive it?' (I said) 'I've never been in one…not that fast. (I was) strictly stock car. I've raced a lot in Colorado.' He says, 'Well I'll tell ya…that's the worst place you can learn. Because everybody is out to cheat; they have modified engines that are illegal.' Yeah, I know! (Bob was very good at modifying). 'Well, I'd like for you to check mine out.' 'What is it?' 'Ferrari.' (Bob sputters) 'A Formula One Ferrari? Oh shit!' (Dr. Stanley) added, 'Try it, you might like it.' I did man, (its like) racing lightning! Let's go with the wind! (That's when) my pro racing 'career' started…"

Bob raced for two years in the early 1960's.

"I started racing in Denver and at Downs Raceway in New Mexico. Second and third was all I'd ever come in on races I had. I raced in Terra Haute, which at that time had one of the most beautiful raceways you ever saw. I (also) raced in Georgia…uh, can't remember the…it was named after a WWII soldier."

Dr. Stanley got away from the Formula One world, to focus on improving the safety and medical needs of racecar drivers. Bob lost his sponsorship and was ready to go back 'home' fulltime.



Back in Trinidad once again, Bob was determined to resurrect the 'Lost Indian Rock Shop'. Bob admits he had to 'float' a big check to enable its creation.

"So I, with no money, went and rented a building for $50 a month. Full blown basement…right on Pine Street. Good business area. I asked for a few days extra, cause I went in on a Tuesday, got set up (through) the week, and then wrote the checks on the weekend. In them days it took a while – about a week to 10 days for the check to (clear). In the meantime, I had booked several clubs to come down for (rock hounding). The whole damn Denver (rock) club came down. At ($20) per head per day and ($10) per child…I would take them to prime areas where they could find arrowheads and prime jasper…which was a swirl agate I had. I made a bunch of money, so when the checks came in, there was money in the bank."

This was around 1962, in Trinidad.

"That set me off (in business) and in 5 years I had a TV repair, lapidary arts and crafts, gas station, deli…and a gaming room. I had (5) slot machines and that was a favorite stop for all the college kids. Two bits a wack and I got 50% of it. That was big money."

Every spare penny was going into Bob's efforts to be a self-made man.

(Personal Input)

Bob was relentless to secure income from any source. Money gifts his daughter Marie received from godparents disappeared soon after, and the rumor money was exchanged after last daughter Veronica was born and adopted out, may have had some validity.

(End Input)